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## BIOGRAPHY.

## OWAIN GLYNDWR\*.

And he was once the glory of his age,  
 Disinterested, just, with every virtue  
 Of civil life adorned—in arms excelling:  
 His only blot was this, that, much provoked,  
 He raised his vengeful arm against his sovereign.

THOMSON.

OWAIN VYCHAN, or Vaughan, usually called Glyndwr†, was born on the 28th of May, 1349, “a year,” we are informed, “remarkable for the first appearance of the pestilence in Wales, and for the birth of Owain Glyndwr‡.” He was a lineal descendant from the princes of Wales, and lord of considerable possessions, near Corwen in Merionethshire. He received his education in England, and appears to have been admitted a student in one of the Inns of Court. But he soon quitted the profession of the law for one more congenial with

\* This biographical sketch of the celebrated Welsh chieftain is from the same pen as the account of his revolt, which appeared in a former Number (vol. ii. p. 448): a circumstance, which we think it proper to intimate, on account of the coincidence in some particulars between the two sketches, which might, otherwise, be ascribed to a wrong cause. On the former occasion the writer dwelt only on a detached part of the hero's life, of which he has now given, and with considerable felicity, a more comprehensive view. Perhaps, however, it might yet be possible, from the remains of the Bards of Glyndwr's time, and especially of those who partook of his princely patronage, to raise a biographical monument to our hero still more worthy of his renown. A few interesting particulars, derived from this source, and relating more immediately to Glyndwr's place of residence, may be found in the first volume of this work, 458 *et seq.*—ED.

† The family name of this hero was Vychan, or Vaughan; he is styled Glyndwr from his patrimony of Glyndyrvdwy, or the Bank-side of the Dee. No name, perhaps, has been so variously spelt. He is called indifferently, Glendour, Glendowr, Glendower, Glyndour, Glyndower, and Glyndwr. In one statute (4 Henry IV. ch. 34) he is described as “Owen ap Glyndourdy, traitour a nostre Sr. le roy.”

‡ M.S. *penes* Mr. Lewis Morris. Holinshed relates a circumstance attending the birth of this chieftain, which is intended, doubtless, to bear some allusion to his sanguinary and turbulent career; “Strange wonders,” he says, “happened at the nativity of this man, for the same night that he was born all his father's horses, in the stable, were found to stand in blood up to their bellies!”

his ardent and sanguine disposition; and, during the tumults, which agitated the country in the reign of Richard the Second, he did not remain an inactive spectator, but espoused the cause of the king, to whom he was sincerely and affectionately attached; and, as a reward for his loyalty, he was created a knight, and appointed *scutiger*, or squire of the body, to that monarch. When Richard was deposed, Owen retired to his estates in Wales, deprecating and lamenting the downfall of his beloved master.

At Glyndyvrwy, then, four centuries ago, lived this Cambrian hero, dispensing numerous blessings amongst his happy and devoted tenantry; and probably with no loftier wishes than those of contributing to the comfort and happiness of his dependants. But he was roused from this peaceful inactivity by oppression unendurable by a Briton. Lord Reginald Grey of Ruthin, whose lordship was contiguous to Glyndyvrwy, wishing to confine his neighbour within the bounds of the Dee, claimed the hills on his side the river, and took possession of them, although they had long been the property of the Glyndwr family. This unjust seizure produced a suit in the courts of law, in which the Welshman obtained a restitution of his lands; and Lord Grey became, in consequence, his most inveterate and deadly enemy.

On the accession of Henry the Fourth to the crown, Grey, relying on the favour and protection of his monarch, again seized the lands, which had been legally awarded to Owen; and, when the latter laid his case before the Parliament, he obtained no redress, nor was his application even noticed. This contumely was aggravated by an insult of greater, and, eventually, of fatal consequence. When Henry went on his first expedition against the Scots, Owain was to have accompanied him with a certain number of his retainers. A writ of summons for this purpose was entrusted to Lord Grey, who designedly and rashly withheld it till the time for Owain's appearance had elapsed; and it was impossible for him to obey the royal mandate. Grey represented his absence as an act of wilful, and, therefore, of traitorous, disobedience; by which wicked and treacherous transaction he procured from Henry a grant of all Owain's lands; the knight himself being, at the same time, declared a traitor. This was not to be patiently

endured by the aggrieved and choleric Cambrian; and a short time from this period saw Owain Glyndwr with a trusty and gallant band of Britons, spreading fire and desolation through the territory of the presumptuous Grey. He soon recovered the lands of which he had been so unjustly deprived, and, actuated by the *lex talionis*, took possession of a large portion of the domains of his enemy. Nor did the consequences rest here. Ambition now entered the mind of the infuriated Chieftain; he called to his recollection his high and princely lineage, and, directing his arms to a nobler cause—the freedom of his country,—involved both nations in a war, which lasted some years, sacrificed many thousand lives, and drenched both countries in blood.

Although the Welsh were at first despised as a bare-footed rabble\*, and their disaffection ridiculed, they were soon found to be a formidable and dangerous enemy. The intelligence of Glyndwr's retaliation on Lord Grey no sooner reached the court, than the king immediately dispatched some troops, under the command of that nobleman and the Lord Talbot, to chastise him; and they arrived with such speed and diligence, that they nearly succeeded in surrounding his house before he gained intimation of their approach. He contrived, however, to escape into the woods, where he did not long continue; but having raised a band of men, and caused himself to be proclaimed Prince of Wales on the 20th of September, 1400, he surprised, plundered, and burnt to the ground, the greater part of the town of Ruthin (the property of Grey) at the time when a fair was held there. Having achieved this, he retired to the mountain-fastnesses, and directed his attention to the speedy augmentation of his forces.

The disturbance in the Principality had hitherto been chiefly considered as a private quarrel between Grey and Glyndwr, and the government did not appear to be much concerned as to

\* John Trevor, Bishop of St. Asaph, foreseeing the danger of driving it to desperate measures a person of Owain's interest, spirit, and abilities, advised more temperate proceedings, adding, that Owain was by no means a despicable enemy, and that the Welsh would certainly be provoked into a general insurrection; his advice was rejected, and he was answered by an English nobleman in the House of Lords, "Se de illis scurris nudipedibus non curare." Pennant, vol. iii. p. 319, and Barrington's Observations on Ancient Statutes.

its issue. Now, however, it assumed a more serious aspect, and became altogether a national contest. The proclamation, issued by Owain, alarmed Henry, who determined to march in person into Wales, to curb the boldness of the rebel chieftain, and to crush, if possible, a revolt daily becoming more extensive and momentous. For this purpose he assembled his troops, and hastened into Wales. But Glyndwr, whose forces were not yet sufficiently powerful, retreated to the hills of Snowdon, and Henry was compelled to return to England without obtaining any material advantage.

That the Welsh might have no plea of undue severity to urge, the king, on the 30th of November in the same year\*, (1400), issued a proclamation, offering to take under his protection all Welshmen, who would repair to Chester, and there make submission to his son Henry; after which they should be at full liberty to return to their respective homes. Few, however, availed themselves of the monarch's clemency. The martial spirit of the Welsh was once more kindled into action; and Glyndwr soon found his cause espoused by numbers of his countrymen. Multitudes from all quarters flocked to his standard, and contributed to make him a most formidable opponent—so formidable, indeed, that Henry, notwithstanding some very urgent affairs which had detained him in the capital, resolved to march again into Wales, and, entering the Principality about the beginning of June, 1401, he ravaged the country in his progress, but was finally forced to retreat, his men suffering severely from fatigue and famine.

The misfortunes which befel the king, greatly encouraged the rebels, and a comet, which ushered in the year 1402, infused new spirit into the minds of a superstitious people, and

\* Henry had previously, on the 5th of this month, escheated all Glyndwr's estates, and made a grant of them to his own brother, John, Earl of Somerset, in whose hands, upon the reverses of Owain, they continued for some time. Thirty-three years, however, after the original grant, Sir John Scudamore, who had married Alicia, daughter and heiress of Glyndwr, brought an action for the recovery of them, but was successfully opposed by the Earl of Somerset, then a prisoner in France. This happened in 1433: upon the attainder of the Duke of Somerset, however, in 1463, the possessions of Glyndwr were alienated from that family, and, after passing through various hands, are now the property respectively, of Sir W. W. Wynn, Bart. and of Gruffydd Hywel Vaughan, Esq. as mentioned in a subsequent part of this sketch.—ED.

imparted additional vigour to their exertions. A victory, also, which Glyndwr obtained, about this time, over a powerful band commanded by Lord Grey, strengthened their hopes of success, and gained the Chieftain many friends and followers. By this event Grey fell into the hands of the insurgents, and was secured in close confinement, till a ransom of 1000 marks, and a promise to marry one of the Chieftain's daughters, released him from captivity\*.

The Welsh patriot now extended his designs, and plundered the domains of such of his countrymen as were inimical to his interests, spreading fire and sword through the lands of his opponents. He revenged, also, in some degree, the indignities inflicted on the unfortunate Richard. John Trevor, Bishop of St. Asaph, who had voted for the deposition of that king, became a marked object of his resentment; and the cathedral, episcopal palace, and canon's house, belonging to his see, were completely destroyed. His ravages became now so considerable and were so fearlessly committed, that Henry was once more compelled to march into Wales; and, to insure success, it was determined that the English army should enter the Principality in three different quarters. The rendezvous of the first division, headed by the king in person, was to be at Shrewsbury; that of the second, under the joint command of the Earls of Stafford and Warwick, and the lords Aberga-venny, Audley, and Berkeley, at Hereford, and that of the third, under the direction of Prince Henry, at Chester: the forces were to be assembled at each place by the 27th of August.

Owain beheld these formidable preparations without dismay, and continued to devastate the country, destroying the principal towns in Glamorganshire,—the inhabitants of that district having refused to embrace his cause, and receiving from all other parts of Wales fresh succours and supplies.

At the time appointed, Henry and his generals advanced towards the Principality; and Glyndwr, too prudent to hazard an engagement with a force so superior in every respect to his own, again retired to the fastnesses among the mountains,

\* His release, however, was not effected till Henry appointed a Commission, dated the 10th of April, 1402, empowering Sir William de Roos, Sir Richard de Grey, Sir William de Willoughby, Sir William de la Zouche, and six other persons to treat with Owain about the ransom, when the sum, specified in the text, was agreed upon, and his Lordship liberated.

driving the cattle from the plains, and destroying every means, by which the enemy could procure food for themselves, or forage for their horses.

The Scots now took advantage of the king's absence from the capital, and, under the command of the renowned Douglas, invaded England with an army of 13,000 men. It is probable that they acted in concert with the Welsh. Both nations had been rendered tributary to the English,—both entertained a common hatred for their conquerors,—and both had groaned under their oppressive domination. Be this as it may, the revolt in the North was of no small advantage to Glyndwr; for this event, and the adverse state of the weather, contributed to compel Henry once more to relinquish his design of reducing the Welsh rebels; and for the third time he quitted the Principality, without having accomplished any part of his purpose.

Three times did Henry Bolingbroke make head  
Against the Welsh: thrice from the banks of Wye,  
And sandy-bottom'd Severn, did they send  
Him bootless back, and weather-beaten home.

About this time, also, the powerful and wealthy family of the Percies conspired to throw off its allegiance to Henry. A dispute between the Earl of Northumberland and the King, respecting the exchange of some prisoners, appears to have been the primary cause of this disaffection; and, perhaps, the desire of becoming entirely independent, might have contributed in no small degree to the same effect. At all events this family and its numerous adherents joined Glyndwr, and added very materially to the power of the Welsh. The rebels gained another important ally this year, Sir Edmund Mortimer, whom Glyndwr had taken prisoner in an action with the English. He procured the alliance of this knight by insinuating that it was in his power to seat him on the throne of his ancestors,—a temptation not to be withstood by the youthful captive,—and Glyndwr and the gallant Percies entered into a confederacy to overthrow the house of Lancaster, and to advance to the sovereignty of England the descendant of the princes of the house of York. So confident were the rebel Chieftains of success, that they determined before hand to divide the empire between

them, so that, when they had subdued their opponents, no discord might arise as to a division of the booty. Henry Percy was to possess the district north of the Trent; Sir Edmund Mortimer all the country from the Trent and Severn to the eastern and western limits of the island; and Glyndwr, the whole of Wales westward from the Severn.

It was on this occasion that Owain to animate his followers, reminded them of the ancient prophecy, which predicted the fall of Henry, under the name of *Moldwarp*, or, "cursed of God's own mouth;" and, to revive those pleasing and heroic sentiments, which are always associated in the mind of a Briton, with the achievements of the mighty Uthyr Pendragon, (the father of the immortal Arthur), he adopted the title of the Dragon; Percy was styled the Lion; and Mortimer the Wolf: and now, in the meridian of his glory, he assembled the states of the Principality at Machynlleth in Montgomeryshire, where he was formally crowned, and acknowledged Prince of Wales\*.

At this assembly the newly-crowned prince narrowly escaped assassination. A gentleman of Brecknockshire, called David Gam, (afterwards knighted for preserving the life of Henry the Fifth at the battle of Agincourt) was among the Chieftains who attended the coronation of Glyndwr. He had been long in the service of Bolingbroke, and, notwithstanding his relationship to Owain (for he married one of his sisters), was firmly attached to the king. Instigated by his attachment to Henry, or, as some say, by the personal exhortations of the monarch himself, he formed the base design of murdering his prince and brother-in-law. His plot, however, was timely discovered, and he was immediately arrested and imprisoned. He would have met with the punishment due to the crime he meditated, had not the prince's most zealous friends exerted their influence in his behalf. He was pardoned, therefore, on conditions that he would adhere in future to the common cause of his country,—a condition he had no opportunity of observing, as he was kept in rigid confinement till the rebellion was quelled.

The affairs of Owain now bore so prosperous an aspect, that

\* The building, now converted into a stable, in which this memorable synod was convened, is still to be seen.



Charles, king of France, entered into an alliance with him\*, and compensated in a slight degree for the loss of the gallant and high-spirited Hotspur, who fell in the battle of Shrewsbury, about a year before. But he did not reap any very extensive advantages from this union. When it was contracted he appears to have arrived at the very acmé of his career, and the crisis was any thing but favourable. Although fortune had hitherto smiled upon him, the time was not far distant when he was to experience her capricious mutability; and, in an engagement between a party of his adherents (in number about 8,000) and some English troops, the former were defeated with the loss of nearly a thousand men. To repair this misfortune Glyndwr instantly dispatched his son Gruffydd with a strong force, and another battle was fought five days afterwards at Mynydd y Pwll Melyn in Brecknockshire, when the Welsh again sustained a defeat; the prince's son being taken prisoner, and his brother Tudyr slain. The latter resembled the prince so closely, that it was at first reported that Glyndwr himself had fallen; but, on examining the body, it was found to be without a wart over the eye, by which the brothers were distinguished from each other.

After this defeat many of the Patriot's followers deserted him, and he was compelled to conceal himself in caves and desert places, from which he occasionally ventured forth to visit a few trusty friends, who still adhered to him, and who supported him with food and other necessities†.

It is possible that our Chieftain's career would have terminated without further hostilities, had not his new ally, the king of France, afforded him assistance. A fleet carrying an army of 12,000 men, sailed from Brest, and reached Wales after a favourable voyage. But this succour, seasonable and liberal as it was, served only to prolong the war, without being eventually of any important service. Glyndwr never recovered the

\* This treaty is dated from Dolgella, in right royal stile: "Datum apud Dolgellum, 10 die menses Maii, 1404, et Principatus nostri quarto;" and begins "Owenus, Dei gratia, Princeps Walliæ, &c."

† There is a cavern, near the sea-side, in the parish of Llangelynin, in Merionethshire, still called *Ogov Owain*, or the Cave of Owen; here the Prince is said to have concealed himself, being secretly supported by Ednyved ab Aron, the representative of the royal tribe of Ednywain ab Bradwen.

defeat of Mynydd y Pwll Melyn. From that time he acted chiefly on the defensive, or meditated nothing more than marauding excursions: his followers were daily forsaking him, and he was at length obliged to seek refuge among the mountains, from whence he never emerged to perform any exploit of consequence. Notwithstanding his ill fortune, however, he was still considered so terrible an enemy, that Henry the Fifth condescended to propose terms for a cessation of hostilities, and a treaty to this effect was concluded a short time before his death,—which happened on the 20th of September, 1415,—and afterwards renewed with his son Meredydd, on the 24th of February in the year following\*.

The most prominent features in the character of Owain Glyndwr were boldness and activity, ambition, bravery, and no small portion of military skill. Hospitable to profuseness†, the patron and liberal encourager of bards‡,—eager and faithful in his friendship—unforgiving and revengeful in his enmities—patriotic, enthusiastic, and irascible—in him were combined all the characteristics of the warm-hearted Cambro-Briton; and his gallant spirit, undaunted and unsubdued to the last, achieved those exploits, which are familiar at this day to

\* This contradicts the general opinion that the Cambrian Patriot died in extreme distress; it was immediately after the defeat of Mynydd y Pwll Melyn that he experienced those calamities usually attributed to a later period of his life, and we have every reason to suppose that he died, weakened, indeed, in spirit, but unsubdued. [He died in Herefordshire, at the house of one of his daughters: Rapin says, that he did not die till the year 1417, but the Welsh accounts, to be preferred in this case, place the event in 1415, as above stated.—ED.]

† Speaking of his hospitality, one of the old Welsh poets (Iolo Goch) relates, that within his mansion were nine spacious halls, each furnished with a ward-robe containing clothing for his retainers; on a verdant bank, near the castle, was a wooden building, erected on pillars and covered with tiles, it contained eight apartments, designed as sleeping-chambers for such guests as graced the castle with their company; in the immediate vicinity was every requisite for the purposes of good eating and drinking; a park, well stocked with deer, a warren, a pigeon-house and heronry, a mill, an orchard, and a vineyard, with a preserve well filled with pike, trout, and salmon. The hospitality of the Chieftain was so boundless, says the bard, that no one could hunger or thirst in his house.

‡ The Rev. Evan Evans in his "Dissertatio de Bardis," thus speaks of Owain's liberality to the then persecuted race of poets; "Hoc ævo multi claruere Bardi, inter quos Iolo Goch, (Iolo the Red) Oweni magnificentiam et victorias ad sydera tulit; fuit enim Owenus Bardorum fautor et Mæcenas, et eos undiquaque ad aulam liberalitè provocabat." p. 89.

the mountain peasant of Merionethshire. He was deeply imbued, too, with the superstition of the times. The fearful omens, which were supposed to have happened at his birth, had, no doubt, considerable influence on his future life. At *his* nativity, he informs us,

The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes ;  
 The goats ran from the mountains, and the herds  
 Were strangely clamorous in the frightened fields.  
 These signs have mark'd me extraordinary,  
 And all the courses of my life do shew,  
 I am not in the roll of common men.  
 Where is he living, clipp'd in with the sea,  
 That chides the banks of England, Scotland, Wales,—  
 Who calls me pupil, or hath read to me ?  
 And bring him out that is but woman's son,  
 Can trace me in the tedious ways of art,  
 And hold me pace in deep experiment ?

Shakespeare, indeed, has glowingly delineated the portrait of this extraordinary man. His belief in supernatural agency,—nay more, his exulting boast that *he* could “call spirits from the vasty deep,” and his ill-constrained choler at the taunts of the provoking Hotspur, are admirable illustrations of what we may suppose to have been the character of the Cambrian Chief; and, although, in this enlightened age, we cannot but regard with detestation the cruelties he often committed on those who fell into his hands, yet we must admire his heroism, and admit that his incitement to arms, in the first instance, was a just and powerful extenuation of the illegality of his conduct. But it is of little importance now, whether he was justified or not in the course he pursued. Years have rolled on, and repaired the ravages which he committed;—the bones of his brave warriors have mouldered into dust,—and no traces of his valiant exploits remain, save such as tradition will supply in the minds of his admiring countrymen\*.

MERVINIUS.

\* The Vaughans of Nannau, Hengwrt, and Rug, in Merionethshire, all branches of one family, are lineally descendants of Glyndwr; and Gruffydd Hywel Vaughan, Esq. of Rug, possesses now a large portion of those domains which once belonged to his ancestor. This gentleman has also in his possession an elegant and highly-prized memorial of the Chieftain: it is a